

**Board of Forestry and Fire Protection  
Range Management Advisory Committee (RMAC)  
Vegetation Management/Fire Focus Group**

**Minutes  
April 19, 2005**

**Attending:**

**RMAC:**

**Representing**

Ken Zimmerman	RMAC Chairman
Mike Connor	Public Member
J.R. McCollister	Public Member
Leonard Hale	Watershed Fire Council of Southern California
Mel Thompson	California Wool Growers Association
Neil McDougald	Cattlemen's Association
Jeff Stephens	CDF / RMAC Executive Secretary

**Members of the Public:**

Joe Rawitzer	
Wolfgang Pittroff	University of California Davis
Allan West	Watershed Fire Council of Southern California

**Call to Order and Introductions:**

Items 1, 2, and 3 of the agenda: J.R. McCollister called the meeting to order April 19, 2005 at 1:15 P.M. Introductions of all present were made. He then asked for a review of the minutes from the February 2005 meeting and made several minor edits. The minutes were approved with edits by unanimous vote.

**Item 4 Review of the CDF Vegetation Management Program (VMP):**

Mike Connor assumed the lead for discussion of the draft report evaluating the CDF Vegetation Management Program (VMP). A double spaced version of the Report dated March 4, 2005 was provided for discussion and edits. Changes to the document were made throughout the discussion which were recorded by Mike Connor. Mr. Connor will incorporate the changes and provide revised copy to Jeff Stephens for distribution to the RMAC.

Discussion of the original program goal of 120,000 acres (page 1 line 18) resulted in a call for clarification of where this figure came from and whether it is supported by data. This discussion was carried by J.R. McCollister, Mel Thompson, Mike Connor, and Ken Zimmerman. It was made clear by J. R. McCollister that

supporting attachments will be provided that show the history of the program and the downward trend in acres treated. Text was modified to show acres treated in the past 10 year period and in the 03/04 fiscal year.

Joe Rawitzer commented that the original authors of VMP believed that 120,000 acres was feasible, but was not met due to many of the same reasons that persist today.

Leonard Hale introduced Al West to the RMAC and asked Mr. West to describe his background. Mr. West stated that he is retired USFS having served in Washington D.C. in administration of USFS programs including extensive experience with fuels management issues. Currently he is Chairman of the Watershed Fire Council of Southern California.

Neil McDougald commented that the document should make a very strong connection with the protection of life and property since this is what seems to be a driving force in fuels management programs. Wolfgang Pittroff commented that endorsement of the life and property issue at the forefront makes the recommendations less controversial. Wording that reflects the life and property issue was added to the text page 1 line 15. Reference to rangeland resources was also eliminated throughout much of the text in recognition that RMAC must address all values at risk, not just range, in order to promote a complete program that would not be viewed as simply an expansion of rangeland burning.

There was considerable discussion of the text on page 2 lines 15-16 concerning reasons for a declining program. Mel Thompson raised the issue of "low priority" for VMP work among Units. Others including Jr. McCollister, Ken Zimmerman, and Mike Connor discussed the difference between reasons for the Department's inability to meet the original goal and excuses for non attainment. Mike Connor made the point that budgets are not an excuse. Where there is a commitment to burn the project will be carried out. Neil McDougald commented that the difficulty with other agencies such as finding an appropriate burn window with air quality management districts is not as serious as the fees imposed by the districts that inhibit burning. Ken Zimmerman noted that the reasons for non-attainment cited by the Department are restriction imposed by other agencies and protection of higher values at risk. Joe Rawitzer stated these are excuses not reasons.

Neil McDougald noted on page 3 line 8 that watershed improvement was a primary reason for the Range Improvement Program (RIP). He also questioned the accuracy of the numbers stated in lines 8-16. Jeff Stephens stated that he will verify the accuracy of these numbers as well all other numeric data for which he has a source. The reference to the Department "conducting" RIP burns was altered to reflect that fact that it was actually landowners completing the work under permit by CDF.

Jeff Stephens stated that he will identify what is meant by the phrase “new CDF programs” found on page 4 line 4.

Neil McDougald stated that the RIP went away because of the VMP, since it was promoted by the Department as a tool that would be used in place of RIP. Wolfgang Pittroff recommended including a statement indicating that the demand for burning left by RIP was not met by VMP. In addition the provision for using outside contractors to meet the demand for burning using private contractors was never implemented. See PRC 4480.

#### Discussion on Program Goals:

Neil McDougald recommended that Protection of Life and Property be moved to number 1 under program goals. Mel Thompson stated that RMAC may wish to list program goals in order of political importance. Ken Zimmerman stated that goals should be prioritized according to our message, and that vegetation management should have multiple objectives in addition to the life and property issue.

Wolfgang Pittroff stated that RMAC’s goal should be to initiate a paradigm shift from emphasis on fire protection towards vegetation management as a means of reducing large fires. RMAC’s message is that we spend too much on fighting fire and not enough on an integrated approach.

Mike Connor stated that RMAC needs to reach agreement on the issue of whether the program is being sold as a resource management tool or as a fire protection tool. Suppression only management is at odds with good resource management.

Neil McDougald noted that CDF is a resource management oriented agency, at least the Foresters are in his area. Joe Rawitzer countered that CDF is 95% fire suppression, not resource management.

Neil McDougald made the point that goal 4 should be rewritten to use the terminology “capture, control and release” when addressing the goal of improving watershed function.

The discussions lead to modifications to several of the goals and listing them in an order of priority that was captured by Mike Connor. Mr. Connor will reflect these changes in the rewrite that will be submitted for consideration before the full RMAC.

#### Expanded Toolbox of Vegetation Treatments:

Joe Rawitzer recommended that reference to protection of man’s developments in this section should be changed to values at risk in order to be more encompassing. RMAC agreed and edits were made. There were other edits that substituted “planned herbivory” for the term “grazing.” A definition for planned herbivory was

also recommended by Wolfgang Pittroff as follows: “The managed use of domestic livestock for the reduction of biomass.”

#### Streamlining the Process:

Jeff Stephens noted that this section dealt primarily with streamlining for environmental compliance under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). He stated that the other factor to consider would be to examine possibilities for streamlining CDF internal policy and procedures for conducting VMP projects.

Joe Rawitzer cited outsourcing of work requires contracting, and the state contracting process is cumbersome and in need of streamlining.

Ken Zimmerman proposed the creation of an approved vendor program where contractors have been pre-selected and much of the red tape is eliminated.

#### Maintenance of Completed Projects:

Ken Zimmerman explained the reasoning behind the need for maintaining VMP projects in that projects simply revert to their pre-project state. J.R. McCollister asked why on page 8, line 8, is the contract extension of 5 years limited to WUI zones. Subsequent discussion resulted in the maintenance period extended to all areas with agreement from Ken Zimmerman.

Subsequent discussion resulted in possibilities on how to handle the issue of maintenance. Leonard Hale noted it should be determined what is meant by maintenance. Five years after the project the ground may be in similar or worse condition. Mike Connor posed the notion that a maintenance clause could be included in the contract, and may be included as part of the landowner cost share.

#### Integration of Programs:

RMAC members explored the concept of using a Coordinated Resource Management Plan (CRMP) as well as other types of organizations listed on page 9, line 4. Neil McDougald noted that some CRMPs are quite successful and others are not. He further stated that CDF has not been a good participant in CRMPs. Under page 9 line 12 a statement was included recommending that an MOU is an appropriate mechanism for joining all stakeholders together with a common set of goals and responsibilities.

#### Set Quantitative Goals:

Joe Rawitzer objected to the Department setting its own program goals. Ken Zimmerman recommended that the Board set program goals and this edit change was made to page 9, line 22.

Support CDF Units Treating Acres:

Neil McDougald recommended a new Department organization where support grants flow directly to the Unit Battalion Chiefs that are willing to do the work. VMP Coordinators should be eliminated. This recommendation was not accepted by the RMAC as a whole.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 with RMAC members agreeing to take up the remainder of the Draft Report on VMP at the full committee meeting on April 20, 2005 during Focus Group reports.